

## Chapter 33: Closure

Fifty-two years old and finding the man who raised me is not my biological father. In fact, I have discovered my three siblings and I all have different fathers. What a shocking journey this has been. Spending hours and hours on the computer searching all the DNA sites, just looking for clues and a DNA match to help tell me who my biological father is. I have solved all my siblings' mysteries. They all now know who their biological father is.

My mother's lack of help continued. Her health and dementia seemed to get worse with each passing day. That road to information was ending.

I ended Chapter 32 with "P.S. He sent in his DNA," referring to Susan's nephew Ryan. I was able to locate him with a little detective work. Let me explain. After getting the names of two possible half-brothers, I was able to track down through Facebook someone I thought was my half-brother Ryan. Ryan appeared on his mother's Facebook page with a woman I suspected was his girlfriend. I knew who Ryan's mother was because of all my research. I could not find Ryan anywhere on Facebook—maybe he didn't have an account? I started searching Facebook for Ryan's presumed girlfriend.

I decided to take a chance and contact this unknown woman through Facebook Messenger. Bingo! She was Ryan's girlfriend, and I did have the right family connection. Her name is Megan. Using Facebook Messenger, I asked her if she knew Ryan. She asked me if I was related to him. I told her it was a lot to explain on Messenger and asked if she would call me. Megan agreed and called my cell phone right away.

Feeling nervous as I answered the phone, I told her straightforward, "I believe Ryan is my half-brother." "Holy shit!" was Megan's response. She was very kind and told me Ryan was working, and she would tell him everything when he got home. We had a long, pleasant conversation about the details of me searching for my biological father and my belief that Roger was Ryan's biological father and mine as well. Megan told me Ryan would probably need time to process all this new information and would probably call me back in a few days. I told her I understood the need to process the information. We said our goodbyes.

A few days had passed when Ryan called. He was nice, and not surprised that his father could have had other children out in the world. He informed me of family details I did not know. He told me I have another half-brother from Roger's first marriage, Roger Jr. Ryan's mother was Roger Sr.'s second wife. Ryan explained that, unfortunately, Roger Jr. was probably in jail somewhere because of a drug addiction problem. Ryan explained that he tries to distance himself from this half-brother because he did not need Roger Jr.'s problems coming into his life. Apparently, the family had tried many times to help Roger Jr. with his addiction by sending him to treatment programs, but Roger Jr. always seemed to fail at recovery. At this point in time, Ryan had no idea where Roger Jr. was living. We talked for a long time on the phone. It seemed

weird that I was talking to my potential half-brother. I still didn't trust anything until DNA tests showed the results. Talking to Ryan was something I never expected to happen in my lifetime. It was hard to believe that, at fifty-two years old, I could have two more half-siblings. I wasn't sure I would ever find the answer to "Who is my biological father?"

I had sent Roger, my potential biological father, a certified letter. I knew he received the letter because I had a tracking number, and he signed for the letter. Why was Roger not contacting me? I wished I knew that answer. I told Ryan about the certified letter and lack of response. Ryan could not explain his father's behavior and told me his father had never said a word about me or the letter.

When our conversation ended, we left it that we would chat again soon. After the conversation, I talked with my wife, Laurie. She has been here for me through this entire process. I wanted to tell her about Ryan and the new discoveries he told me. I was excited to have a potential younger brother and the possibility of getting to know him. I couldn't sleep. I tossed and turned, as my head was spinning. Was this the end of the long journey? Or just a new beginning?

Ryan and I continued to talk and text. I could tell we are similar in many ways. We both use humor. Both of us are smart-asses. We exchanged many jokes about our new discovery of each other. Ryan agreed to do an Ancestry DNA kit. He wanted to know if we were half-siblings; after all, I did match DNA to his Aunt Susan.

Megan, Ryan's girlfriend, called to tell me Ryan was in the hospital with kidney stones. I asked her if Ryan still agreed to do the DNA test. I told Megan I would pay for a kit and get it mailed to him right away. Probably not the right time to ask for DNA, when Ryan is in excruciating pain. Still, I did ask. I knew he would find humor in that despite his circumstances. He agreed to do the test. While in the hospital he laughed and made a comment that I'd better be his half-sister, because I am a pain in the ass. I just laughed.

I ordered a DNA kit from Ancestry and it shipped to his home address. Now the wait began again. I had waited for so long; you would think I would be used to it by now. It was still not an easy thing to do.

Ryan's DNA results were in after several weeks. It was confirmed: He is my half-brother. All the searching Janet and I did finally paid off. I have confirmed DNA and another half-sibling—well, really two, if Roger Jr. is really Roger Sr.'s biological son. I felt nervous knowing for a DNA fact that Roger is my biological father. He is my father and Ryan's father. Wow! What a ride this has been. Emotions up and down, the stress of not knowing until now.

Now what? What do we do with all of this? I guessed the next conversation I had with Ryan would lead us in the direction life was supposed to take us. I was so happy and nervous all at the same time. Now I needed to meet my half-brother. Did we look alike? What were his interests? We knew we both had the same smart-ass humor. So many thoughts in my brain again.

We exchanged several pictures by text. We did look alike. It was crazy to see our baby pictures and other later ones next to each other. Sharing pictures of us as we aged was eye-opening. We looked so much alike. Me, the female version of him and he, the male version of me. I do have short hair!

Laurie and I made plans to meet Ryan for the first time. We got our plane tickets and found a really cool hotel overlooking a minor league baseball stadium in Manchester, New Hampshire. Too bad it was not baseball season. It would have been fun to watch a game. A few weeks passed and our meeting date was getting closer. Ryan and I had been chatting on the phone and texting often. It felt really cool to have a younger brother; I was excited to meet him. Maybe this sibling relationship would be a closer one. Maybe he needed an older sister. Our Aunt Susan and her husband were also going to meet us at the hotel.

What could go wrong? A storm, a damn hurricane coming up the east coast! Laurie and I had to cancel our trip. Was this a sign of things to come? Flights all over were being canceled, and now we would have to reschedule this trip. Another *Seinfeld* episode in the story of my life. Always something crazy to stop me in my tracks. We would have to wait a few months to reschedule because of prior engagements. This was not at all what I wanted, again more waiting! No one can ever say I don't have patience. My patience in this life has been tested over and over. If there is such a thing as reincarnation, I will not need to learn the lesson of patience. Cross that off my lesson plan. Been there, done that!

Ryan and I continued to talk on the phone and get to know each other. I still had not told my other siblings that I had solved my own mystery and now knew who my biological father is. I'm not sure why I was waiting—I think because I didn't want to jinx anything. Then there is the fact that I am not really close with my siblings. I wished my friend Karen was living and I could talk to her. She was probably on the other side smiling that I found the answer. I do believe she is with me. This had been a long journey for me, and I wanted everything to go well. This journey is about me, not my other siblings, I told myself. I sometimes didn't know how to feel with all this new information, information I had searched for without giving up. Sometimes my brain felt like it was on overload. I guess, like the old saying goes, don't ask unless you want to know. I was in the no-turning-back stage now. I now knew the truth; Roger is my biological father. I felt torn because Roger was not contacting me. I asked myself so many questions. Was he hoping I would go away after my letter? It was all so confusing with him. Had his rejection of me started without him knowing me? I still was shocked that my dad, the man who raised me, was not my biological father. Who the hell would think I would be a retired cop solving my own family's secrets in my fifties? Are there more family secrets to be found?

Ryan and Aunt Susan had both sent me pictures of Roger, old pictures and newer ones. It was strange for me to now see pictures of a man I resemble. I always wanted to see a picture of my biological father, since starting this crazy journey. Now, I couldn't believe it was happening.

He and I do have a lot of similar features. Now, I really understood how my adoptive friends felt when they saw a picture of their biological parent for the first time. I knew I looked like my mom, but now I saw my biological father's photos, and we had many similarities. We have a face dimple in the same location, and I have his eyes and cheeks. It was now so real, seeing pictures.

Laurie and I sat back and laughed at all of this. We found the humor in my mom's affairs and all my siblings having different fathers. All the discoveries in the last two years. I really don't know how I have done this. Maybe humor makes it okay? You can't change things. Humor was the one thing Ryan and I definitely had in common, in our own way. I wondered if the humor was meant to cover up the sadness of the family. My mind was constantly running on all these thoughts. I thought a comedy series of my life would make a great new show on Netflix.

Ryan and I were raised in completely different ways. I feel he lacked the bonding of a father, which I had; both our mothers were very caring. I only wish he had a fun-filled childhood like I did. It seems he grew up very quickly and had early-life responsibilities and worries. That is not the way a child is supposed to grow up. I saw a saying that goes like this: A child's shoulders were not built to bear the weight of their parents' choices. I always liked this. I feel this fits Ryan more than me. I was able to be a child without responsibility and worry. I thank my parents for that.

I did not tell my mother I found my biological father. I showed her a picture of him in his younger days and asked if she recognized him. She only commented that he was a good-looking man. I tried not to laugh. I really wanted to say, he'd better be good-looking, you slept with him and as a result here I am. I just kept my comments to myself, which was hard to do. But because of my mom's health, I still wanted to protect her and her feelings. I thought to myself, what good would it do? Would she even understand? Maybe it would make me feel better? I didn't know the answer. Just something else to think about.

We planned a new trip to New Hampshire. A few days before our trip Ryan and I were talking on the phone. I told him I thought he should tell Roger, our father, I was coming to town. I wanted to give Roger an opportunity to meet me. I wanted to see if he would. He still hadn't responded to the certified letter. My curiosity to know him was getting stronger. I told Ryan that I wished he would tell Roger that he knew about me, and we were in contact. Maybe coming from Ryan, Roger would feel more at ease with the subject. Ryan said he had thought about it, but Roger was in a bad mood the last time he talked to him. I explained to Ryan that I hoped he would tell Roger he and I were going to have a sister-brother relationship. I could tell Ryan felt like this was necessary, but I suspected the thought of the conversation with Roger was awkward for him. It seemed the family was lacking in the communication process. We ended our phone conversation and acknowledged that we would see each other in a few days. About an hour's time had passed when Ryan called back and said, "I have an early Christmas present for you."

He told me Roger was coming to lunch with us on Saturday. Wow, I couldn't believe it! Ryan told me I owe him a lot of past years of missed Christmas gifts. We both laughed. I was just shocked that he even called Roger and told him I was coming to town. I hadn't seen that coming.

On a Friday in November 2018 Laurie and I flew to New Hampshire to meet my half-brother Ryan, half-aunt Susan, and my biological father. No hurricane in the forecast this time. I felt nervous and excited, and hoped everything would go well. Our plane was on time as we arrived in Manchester, New Hampshire. We got a rental car and headed toward the hotel. Ryan, his girlfriend, Megan, Aunt Susan, and Susan's husband were meeting us at the hotel at 7:00 p.m. We were to have dinner at the hotel restaurant. It was raining really hard as we got the rental car. A normally fifteen-minute drive took us over an hour; it didn't help that we missed our exit and went way out of our way. Another adventure for Laurie and me. We just laughed. We got lost and were going to be late. All I could think was, of course this is happening. It's my crazy world.

We finally made it to the hotel safely. As we walked in, Susan spotted us and came over and gave me a huge hug. She said, "I can't believe this is happening and is real." Laurie said hello and headed to check us into our room. We quickly took our luggage to the room and went back downstairs to meet with Aunt Susan and her husband. We got a table in the restaurant, which was right off the hotel lobby. Ryan was running late. We sat down and started chatting. It felt like I had known Aunt Susan a long time. I felt very comfortable. Having some wine, I felt even more relaxed. I had two heavy pours.

Ryan and Megan showed up. We all hugged and sat down at the table. I couldn't believe how much he and I resembled one another. Pictures are one thing, but in person we really did look alike. We all chatted for hours and hours. We even told the waitress we were meeting for the first time. She was shocked and excited for our story. Ryan and I gave her a quick, Reader's Digest version of how we found out we were siblings. It was a great night, chatting and getting to know each other. After midnight we said our goodbyes, and Ryan and Megan left to drive about an hour home in the rain. We would see each other for lunch the next day, in nearby Massachusetts. Aunt Susan and her husband were staying the night at the hotel, so they didn't have to drive home in the rain after dark. I totally understood that, I can't see to drive at night these days either, especially in rain. Laurie always drives us at night and laughs that I can't see, and I am younger than she.

So excited we all met, I couldn't get much sleep. My heart was full of gratitude. I couldn't stop thinking that Ryan made arrangements for Roger to meet us for lunch the next day. I was going to meet my biological father for the first time. I was fifty-two years old now, and this still was very shocking to me. To think the man that raised me was not my biological father. I was in New Hampshire! Questions to ask this stranger ran through my head all night. How would he react? Did he date my mother? How did they meet? Did he know about me? Was it a

one-night thing? So many thoughts, so many answers I wanted. My brain was going in all different directions. Usually, I am the one who puts my head on the pillow and is asleep within ten seconds. Laurie always tells me she has never known someone who falls asleep so fast. Well, that was not happening. It was a toss-and-turn night for me.

Morning arrived and we met Aunt Susan and her husband downstairs for breakfast at the hotel. Aunt Susan was still shocked that she had a niece. I think the entire thing was a bit overwhelming for both of us. We had another pleasant conversation over breakfast. I was a bit nervous this morning because I knew in a few hours I would meet Roger for the first time.

Around eleven in the morning Laurie and I headed to Massachusetts in our rental car. We found the restaurant where we were going to meet. My belly was still so full from breakfast, and being nervous, I didn't know how I could eat. Laurie and I went inside and got a table. Laurie asked me what I would say. I really had no idea, other than "Surprise!" You'd think I would have had an entire speech ready in my head. I told Laurie I had to pee, and she said, "Don't you leave me here alone. I don't want him to think I am you." We both laughed. About ten minutes had gone by when I saw Ryan and who I believed was Roger walking behind him. Ryan waved, and they came toward us. I did the first thing that came into my brain: I stood up and said, "Surprise!" Roger looked at me and gave me a big hug. I could tell by his eyes that he was touched but at a loss for words. After all, I had had almost two years to process this information. He had had only about four months. But then again, I didn't want to make excuses for him; he had had every opportunity to contact me after he read my certified letter. He never attempted to contact me. I did hold a bit of anger.

We all exchanged pleasantries. I gave him my book, *Exposed by DNA*. Originally it was finished in 2018. This "Closure" chapter was written in 2021 to bring the story to an end. I told Roger, "This is my story searching for you." Inside the book I had written a personal note for Roger. He and Ryan both read what I had written and got tears in their eyes. I guess I was a bit shocked and, of course, what came blurting out of my mouth but "Are you both crying?" I then laughed, but it was a nervous laugh, I didn't know how to react. I shared pictures with Roger of me as an infant and one of me in my police uniform. He asked if he could keep the pictures. I was happy he wanted them and said yes. I knew Roger liked to play golf, so I gave him some Maryland logo golf balls. Of course, since we had eaten a huge breakfast, Laurie and I were not very hungry. We ended up getting one dish and splitting it. We all sat and chatted for about two hours before leaving the restaurant. Laurie and I followed Ryan and Roger back to Ryan's house so we could all sit down and talk more.

Ryan had a cute house, and I loved the fact that he lived directly across from a huge cemetery. He had a cute rescue pit bull who was super sweet, and of course I love dogs. We took a few group pictures of all of us and then a few pictures of Roger and me, and me with Ryan.

When viewing the pictures, we could see that we all have very similar features. This was just so real now.

A few hours passed as we talked. I shared with Roger a lot of the family history I discovered while searching to find him. He shared a few stories about his parents and siblings. He still seemed very cautious in what he shared, leaving me with a somewhat distant feeling. I found that interesting. I seemed to know more about the genealogy of his family than he did. Ryan did not know much history on his father's side other than basic information he had been told. I shared a lot of the information I had discovered with both of them. It was getting close to dinner time, and Laurie and I still had to drive the unknown roads back to the hotel in New Hampshire. We said our goodbyes and planned to stay in touch. It was weird to me saying goodbye. I guess I had somewhat of a scenario planned for my reunion with Roger and Ryan. It was not what I had imagined. Ryan was more caring and accepting. I wasn't sure what Roger thought. Was he freaked out that he had a gay daughter? I have been out of the "closet" since my teen years, and am very happy and married. Was this an issue for him? Could he have known about me all along? Did he know my mom was pregnant way back then, and he was my father? He didn't ask many questions about my life, which seemed odd to me. The only thing he did say, in a funny comment, was what the title of my next book should be. He and my mother apparently used to have lunch dates on Fridays. He thought I should call it *Lunch Date*.

In the morning I chatted with Ryan a bit on the phone. Laurie and I had plans to do a bit of sightseeing. We wanted to see Salem, Massachusetts, and the witch stuff there. We sat in on a mock witch trial, which was narrated and done very well. Afterward, we walked around the town and had lunch. Our waitress was very nice, and we even shared with her a little bit about why we were in Massachusetts, and me finding my half-brother. She told me she would buy my book. As we started to head back to the hotel in New Hampshire, I contacted Ryan to see what he was doing the rest of the day. We were about twenty minutes from his house, and I wanted to see him again. He invited us to come back to his house and hang out. Laurie and I did exactly that. It would be good to spend more time getting to know him. While we were at his house, Ryan told me the one big difference between us: He was a Republican and I was a Democrat. He made it clear that he was all red, no matter what. I was a little surprised he was bringing up politics. I guess he remembered in my book I mentioned my political views. I started to realize our morals and values did not match at all. He said some things I was shocked about. I didn't care for our current Republican president; Ryan thought he was great. I wasn't sure how that would affect our sibling bond. I have voted for a Republican, just not "that guy." I didn't know how anyone could have any respect for a bully. He was not a leader, just a reality TV star, not a president.

At this point I didn't say too much about it. I really wanted to see where this relationship was headed. I had fought too hard for women's rights, gay marriage, and equal rights. I was not going backward. I didn't know Ryan very well, and he did not know me. We both had our strong

beliefs. I will never lose my own values for anyone, and I do fight for what I believe. This relationship or lack of a relationship would be interesting. We said our goodbyes and left.

Laurie and I made it back home safe and sound. All quiet on the home front. Apparently, my mother and father had made out okay while we were gone. No emergencies had happened. They probably didn't remember we were gone. My father thought we went north to see friends. My mother probably didn't remember we were gone. Every day could be different, with her dementia.

We have learned to hate our home phone ringing at night. Between my parents' emergency night calls and Laurie's uncle calling, we have had our fill. Nothing like the phone scaring the shit out of you at two in the morning. Laurie's Uncle Bob would call our home phone in the middle of the night, scaring the crap out of us. When Laurie answered, Uncle Bob would act like it was daytime and just start chatting. We would both be shocked, and our hearts would be racing for hours after the call. No sleep on those nights. However, Uncle Bob was the kindest soul. It would make us laugh the next day, but in the middle of the night, that ring would make our hearts jolt. Caller ID can be the worst thing sometimes, seeing the number in the middle of the night. Your first thoughts: What's wrong? What has happened?

I guess I kind of understand now what parents go through with their kids out all night—the worry of the phone call. They say we become our parents as we get older, and getting even older we become the child. I think they are both right. I worry that my parents are the children now. I don't have kids, and this is not what I ever imagined as I got older.

On a visit with my mother, I told her I had met Roger. She looked confused, but it was hard to say what she was thinking because she still held that secret in her soul. She acted curious as I told her about our trip. She didn't ask any questions, just listened to me talk. I just didn't get it; I was a grown adult, and I had told her that I found him. What was there still to hide? I still ponder that. I wished that she would just tell me about him. Never any luck with that wish.

Thanksgiving and then Christmas passed. Both Ryan and Roger called at each holiday to say hello. This was all so new to me. My own siblings in Maryland don't even call me on a holiday. Family is so damn weird and unpredictable. Laurie and a few other family members met for lunch at the facility where my mom now lived. The staff had a nice meal for all the residents and their families. My mother was in an okay mood at first, but then was ready to go back to her room. She was ready for all of us to leave. I didn't know if this was all overwhelming to her. But then again, as my mom got older, she really didn't like to socialize, even with her own family. She missed many family gatherings and would make excuses not to go. Guilt, perhaps? She didn't really call her friends either, and she became more of a recluse. I know she thought her life was over because of the Parkinson's diagnosis. She changed quickly.

Laurie and I decided that since it was still early on Christmas Day, we should go try our luck at the casino. We love the casino. It paid off—I won five thousand dollars on a quarter slot



machine. Merry Christmas to us. We laughed in excitement. We are very lucky together, and that day proved it once again. I was surprised at how many people were at the casino on Christmas Day. We never thought it would be crowded.

Funny, I found out my biological father also likes to go to casinos. When we got home, I texted Ryan to tell him I won. Ryan told me he never was that lucky. Of course, I responded, “With a bad attitude, you won’t ever win.”

I’m going to skip ahead in time. It has been over a year since I talked to Roger, my biological father. He never calls to say hello or check in on me anymore. I have left messages for him. He called in February 2020 to say he was sorry to hear that my mom had passed away. My mom passed away in December 2019. I guess the call was better late than never. Ryan must have told Roger at some point about my mom, since they do talk. I don’t really know when he found out about my mom’s death. He never asked anything about my mom’s health or anything, even after I talked about her. Friends I have not talked to in years called and sent sympathy cards to me after my mom died. I believe Roger lacks in compassion. Maybe because his parents were awful to him, or so I’ve heard. Family traits seem to pass onto next generations. My conversations with Roger, when we did have them, were very superficial. How’s the weather? Have you been to the casino? He never asked about my wife or family or anything personal.

I talked to my parents many times in a week, if only to check in and see if they needed anything. It’s so weird for me to understand the communication—or should I say lack of communication—between Roger and Ryan, and now me. I don’t get it, and probably never will. They do not have a close relationship. I can’t imagine having a kid and not wanting to be involved in their life. Roger doesn’t talk to his own siblings. My Aunt Susan, who helped me find Roger in the beginning, has not spoken to him since the day she told him about me in 2018. Roger’s brother, my newfound uncle, calls me and always tells me he wishes I was his child not Roger’s. He is nothing like his brother, my biological father.

Ryan told me that Roger’s not calling me has to do with his third wife. She thinks I want something from them. I got the impression Roger and his third wife are both selfish and think everyone always wants something. Maybe because they always want something from people, their own selfishness comes out? I want nothing from them. I have never met his third wife. Roger never even talked about his wife to me. Both Ryan and I have made our own success in life and need nothing. I actually feel sorry for Roger.

I stay in touch with Ryan here and there. Roger completely disappeared. Apparently, he moved to Florida, according to Ryan. Aunt Susan and I text now and then. I wish it was a fairy-tale ending. But at least I found the answers and never gave up. I will always say this to anyone searching: Never give up.

My parents are my parents, and I will always treasure both of them. Roger is just an affair my mom had, a sperm donor. I guess the lesson I have learned is, life does throw you curve balls. I am so happy my life took this path and I had two great parents.